

Never
Stapleton Nash

Even if we never walk in a golden cornfield,
as I have pictured us doing many times,
and you never look at me and say the things
you already say, but meaning them differently—
beautiful,
wonderful,
even if I never find a place where voices can't reach me,
and I never find out what reality feels like for other people
when they reach that place
that belongs to them and always will—

I have know what it is to love and wonder
and to feel the universe wrapping me in marvels.
Even on the coldest day in December
my hair wet and my socks thin
I felt something rise in me like molten gold.

Melting the stainless steel drum
that has long been a placeholder for a human heart.
Because of you, I know what it means
to walk through a park and scarcely breathe
as every tree leans down to embrace me
and bitter wind fills my coat like a sail
and I can scarcely breathe because
of the loveliness of my own feeling.
I know what it is to live as people live,
and not as dogs live;

I know how it feels to open my mouth
and swallow the light.
I do not speak here in the grammar of dreams,
with confusion and misplaced veneration,
with impossible hallways turning in on themselves.
I speak with conviction of a poor beast
who has learned how to shut the door on fear,
who has learned how to walk upright and,
laughing, found it easy.

Even if I never walk with you in golden summer,
I have walked without you in December,
my hair freezing to my temples,
breathless to think of a future where
the sun rises, even in winter.

Stapleton Nash is a graduate of McGill University, where she studied English Literature. She has since been teaching English just outside of Taipei. In her free time, she writes.